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# THE FUTURE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

BY SYDNEY BROOKS

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THE murder, on June 28th, of the Austro-Hungarian Heir-Presumptive, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and of his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, added one more, and a peculiarly brutal one, to the tragedies that for the past hundred and fifty years have incessantly assailed the House of Hapsburg. It cut short, too, political possibilities on which many hopes, all the more passionate for their vagueness, had been founded, a career that had shown not a few signs of vigorous capacity, and a semi-social, semi-Constitutional entanglement that was already supremely engrossing and that threatened before long to prove a source of no little embarrassment both to the Court and to the Realm. Francis Ferdinand up to the moment of his death was still something of a dark horse. Any time during the past two decades, even in Vienna itself, it has been possible to collect twenty different estimates from twenty equally well-informed observers of the Archduke's political views, character, ambitions, and activities. The light that beat on him when the suicide of Prince Rudolph placed him next in succession to the throne failed to illumine him. The book that he wrote on his travels round the world was likewise too severely edited to reveal more than the outside husk of his mind and temperament. But it was thought significant that from the first page to the last he hardly once mentioned Germany, that he openly and enthusiastically praised the French, that while liking the English as individuals and admiring, though with reservations, their work as empire-builders he seemed to feel little sympathy with them collectively, and that his trip to the United States left him apparently without a single pleasant recollection either of the people or the country. But all this does not take us very far, and of trustworthy data on which to base a judgment there is curiously little.

That little, however, is interesting. There emerges from the study of it a picture of a shy, slow, rather heavy man, stiff-necked to a degree, a stanch Catholic—he was brought up by the Jesuits and he openly patronized the Katholischer Schulverein, an ultra-clerical and ultra-reactionary association that was anti-German, anti-Magyar, anti-Semite, anti-everything except the Church and the dynasty as the bulwark of the Church—capable in his relations with men and women of a few deep affections and of one overpowering passion, but in general company ceremoniously unexpansive and distraught, a man of simple tastes and stubborn pride, an exacting worker, not without visions of large schemes in statesmanship or intrigue, and plodding toward whatever end he sought with a tenacity that merely thrived on opposition. Quick-tempered and impetuous by nature, he had himself under thorough control. It was only of recent years that he became anything of a political power, but his influence, there is good reason for thinking, was potent during the past decade in more than one direction. No doubt far more was ascribed to him than he ever really contemplated, but two significant developments unquestionably owed much to his initiative and support. It was he who inspired the building of the Austrian Dreadnoughts and did all he could to hasten the day when the Dual Monarchy would count among the naval Powers of the Mediterranean and Adriatic. And it was he who was primarily responsible for the appointment of Baron von Aehrenthal and who consistently applauded his “forward” policy in the Balkans, the first fruit of which was the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a certain emancipation of Austro-Hungarian foreign affairs from the dictation of Berlin.

In domestic politics, too, it is known that he had no liking for the Magyars, that he chafed under the exactions they were able to levy upon the Austrian half of the realm, and that in the conflict between the Crown and the Hungarian Parliament over the army question he constantly urged the Emperor to stand firm against Magyar pretensions. He cultivated, moreover, close personal relations with the leaders of the various races—the Rumanians, the Slovaks, and the Serbo-Croatians—who are more or less oppressed by the Magyars; while his Bohemian wife and properties made him familiar with and, it was thought, sympathetic to the demand of the Czechs for Bohemian autonomy. Indeed,

it was generally believed that he was feeling his way toward, and on his accession would endeavor to give effect to, the conversion of the realm of the Hapsburgs from a Dual to a Triple and even a Quadruple Monarchy. Men assumed, rather by instinct and inference than on any more concrete grounds, that he favored the creation of a self-governing southern Slav State to offset and detract from the predominance of the Magyars, and that he would prove as Emperor by no means averse from the recognition of the ancient rights of the Kingdom of Bohemia. The understanding was, in other words, that he regarded Federalism as the ultimate destiny of Austria-Hungary, and that had the Balkan War gone as he and most Austrians expected it to go, had either the Turks in the first struggle or the Bulgarians in the second succeeded in crushing Servia, he would have urged the Emperor to intervene, to extend an Austro-Hungarian protectorate over the whole of the Serbo-Croatian race, and so pave the way to the formation of a new Catholic State under the sovereignty of Vienna. Such schemes with all their incalculable risks may have passed before his eyes; nobody—or nobody, at any rate, who is willing to talk—is able either to affirm or to deny that they did not. What at least is certain is that he was supposed to entertain them and that the supposition impelled every race in that polyglot Empire to anticipate his accession to the throne with the keenest expectancy.

The most decisive act of his life, the act that first revealed him to the world and to his own countrymen as a man of formidable will-power, was his marriage to Countess Chotek. Often urged, badgered, almost commanded to marry by the Emperor and his Ministers and by the opinion of the Court and of the Press, he succeeded at length in making it understood that he would choose his own wife in his own good time. Just when every one had pretty well abandoned in despair the idea of his ever marrying at all, he fell in love with Countess Sophie Chotek, a lady-in-waiting in the château of one of his cousins, and a clever, sympathetic member of a noble but impoverished Czech family. Probably nobody thought that the Emperor would ever consent to his making her his wife. For by the family law of the Hapsburgs such a marriage was technically a *mésalliance*. Francis Ferdinand could become Emperor of Austria, but his wife could never become Empress, nor could their eldest

son inherit the throne. That in itself was thought to be a sufficient impediment. But what added to its gravity and brought a new element of uncertainty into the whole situation was that the Hungarian law recognized no such thing as a morganatic union, and that consequently the consort of the King of Hungary was *ipso facto* Queen and their eldest son the Heir-Apparent. To all the other distracting problems of the Dual Monarchy there would thus be added, if the marriage were to take place, the possibility of a dispute over the succession. And besides these political objections to the Archduke's union with a lady not of his own rank there were the social objections, nowhere so strong as in Vienna, because nowhere else are blood and station so esteemed. Nevertheless, in spite of the most intense opposition, the Archduke's persistence, backed up by the influence of the Vatican, carried the day. A solemn pledge was, however, obtained from him that he would always regard his marriage as a morganatic union, one on which no claim to a share in his rights as a member of the reigning house could ever be founded, either by his wife or any child she might bear him; and he swore also, with equal solemnity, never to annul this declaration, never to undertake anything that could in any way weaken or destroy its force.

There are those, however, who are firmly convinced that the keynote to almost everything the Archduke did or attempted in the past fourteen years was his determination to be released from his pledge, to place his wife by his side as Empress, and to secure to his son and heir the succession to the throne. His influence with the Vatican and with all the Clericals in Austria and the marked change that came over his formerly distant relations with the Kaiser were widely interpreted as indicative of a plan to bring pressure upon the Emperor to acquit him of the consequences of his vow. That there was such a plan is probable. That ultimately, if not by constraining the Emperor, then through the instrumentality of foreign recognition or of a vote in the Austrian Reichsrath or of a dispensation from the Vatican, it would have succeeded, is also most likely. But that the Archduke could never have gained his point without a furious social struggle with the entire Austrian aristocracy, without convulsing the Court, and without raising some very delicate moral and constitutional problems, may be looked upon as certain; and when in addition it is remem-

bered that his Clerical leanings and his Federalist and anti-Magyar sympathies were already a ground for serious uneasiness as well as for sanguine and perhaps unrealizable hopes, it will be understood that, mingling with the horror at the crime of Serajero, there is an emotion of something like relief that Austria-Hungary has been spared the manifold problems that the accession of Francis Ferdinand must inevitably have propounded.

The shadows, however, that lower over the future of the Dual Monarchy are very little dispelled thereby. The new Heir-Presumptive is young and popular, but politically an unknown quantity; and he sees before him responsibilities that might well test a Bismarck or a Cavour. For what is the realm of the Hapsburgs? It is a jumble of eight or nine polyglot peoples, cooped up in a space smaller than Texas, owning a common scepter, but without cohesion or common interests or a common character. Each race has lived its own life, made its own history, produced its own literature, and struggled unceasingly to dominate its neighbors. Up to the middle of the last century the Germans were the victors. They ruled the whole realm from Vienna, enforced German law and the German language everywhere, and tried to make each race forget that it had ever had a history, a language, or an entity of its own. Solferino and Sadowa overthrew their leadership. The Hungarians, or rather the dominant race in Hungary, the Magyars, recovered their independence, and a great wave of patriotism swept through the races that had been so nearly extinguished. It showed itself first in a swift revival of local dialects; it spread from schools and literary societies and patriotic poets to patriotic historians and statesmen, under whose guidance it culminated in a demand for the restoration of national rights.

That has been conspicuously the case with the Bohemian agitation. The efforts of the Czechs to elbow out the Germans and to re-establish the ancient kingdom of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, with a Parliament at Prague, and a recognition of the equality of the German and Bohemian languages, have been one of the main battle-grounds of Austrian politics during the past fifty years. And it was the comparative success of these efforts that for many successive years paralyzed parliamentary government in Austria, drove premier after premier into resignation, and made men think that the Dual Monarchy was on the verge of dis-

solution. The Bohemian question is not unlike the Irish. In both countries there is a fierce and instinctive racial antipathy. In both there is a demand for Home Rule supported by the native majority and resisted by the foreign "garrison." The position of the Germans in Bohemia is precisely that of the English and Scotch settlers in Ulster. The position of the Czechs is precisely that of the Irish Nationalists. The German feels for the inflammable and "interesting" Slav very much as the Anglo-Saxon for the Celt, and the Slav retorts upon the "pig-headed" German the same epithets that fall from Mr. Redmond and his followers. The Germans in the Vienna Reichsrath feel themselves bound to the preservation of the German colony in Bohemia just as the English majority at Westminster holds itself responsible for the civil and religious liberties of the English colony in Ireland.

But the Bohemian question is really worse than the Irish. It is as bad as the Irish question would be if the Irish still spoke Erse, and if Ireland were within sight of the United States. What has accentuated and embittered the German-Czech feud and raised it to international importance is, first, a difference of language, and, secondly, the neighborhood of two great Powers, each of which claims kinship with the warring races. The language question is, on the surface, nothing more than the question of whether in the administration of Bohemia, in the law courts and Government offices, an uncouth Slav dialect, spoken by the majority of the Bohemian people, but as useless outside Bohemia as Gaelic outside the Highlands, shall be put on an equality with German, the language of a great commerce and a great literature, known the world over, and the native tongue of nearly half the population of Bohemia. That is in itself a complex and delicate problem. But its difficulties are immensely increased by the injection of the race issue. The Germans look upon an admission of the official equality of the two tongues as the thin end of the wedge of Slav inundation, the forerunner of German absorption by an inferior and hated race. In fighting for the German language they are fighting for German rule and German authority, for the last remnants of an ascendancy which was once absolute throughout the Empire. The bitterness of the struggle between them has led both nationalities at times into the awkward habit of looking across the border for help. Whenever a concession is made

to the Czechs the Germans vow they will stand it no longer, and that, sooner than stay and be swamped, they will exchange the Hapsburgs for the Hohenzollerns and join the great German Empire across the border; while directly the Germans win a point in the endless fight there follows the spectacle of five million Czechs appealing to their Russian brothers and cautiously sounding the Czar's "racial instincts." All this may mean nothing, but it is worth noting that only a few years ago both in Berlin and Vienna there existed fully formed and most active parties with no other plank in their platform than the consolidation of German-speaking Austria with the German Empire.

And this is but one of the troubles of the Hapsburg Monarchy. The same or a very similar racial ferment obtains among the Poles and Ruthenians, among the Germans and Italians in the Tyrol, and among the Hungarian Magyars and the Slav races whom they hold severely in check. Nor is that all. There are a hundred differences of religion and social and economic interest. There is Anti-Semitism, which is the protest of the small trader against the commercial prosperity of the Jews. There are all the familiar conflicts between landowners and manufacturers, between Clericalism and Liberalism, between the aristocracy and the people. There is the ceaseless endeavor of the Vatican to undermine the Triple Alliance by reducing Austria to impotence. There is the growth of industrial and agrarian socialism. There is the increasing antagonism of sentiment and interests between the Germans in Austria and the Magyars in Hungary. There is the great and menacing upthrust of the Southern Slavs since the Balkan War. There is the throttling of trade in a thousand cumbrous restrictions imposed by a bureaucracy that instinctively puts the barracks before the factory. And, finally, there is a wretched fiscal and a still more iniquitous parliamentary system. No foreigner can hope to follow the crossings and interplay of all these currents. Austria-Hungary is a many-tongued chaos in which even Austrians and Hungarians can see no more than a half-light. One cannot, therefore, wonder that many people have looked forward with dread to the time when the venerable Emperor's patient and calming wisdom is no longer guiding the helm; or that they should anticipate a terrific racial explosion that would hurl German-speaking Austria into the arms of the Hohenzollerns, deposit an



autonomous Czech State here and an autonomous Polish State there, both of them destined finally to absorption into the Russian Empire, join the Trentino to Italy, create a Greater Serbia, and leave the Magyars to form an embarrassingly naked "buffer State."

But these apprehensions have been the common stock of political prophecy for a generation and more, and yet Austria-Hungary still survives. Indeed, one of the best reasons for thinking that the Dual Monarchy will not break up is that it has not already done so. The prophets of disruption, stimulated by the assassination of the Heir-Presumptive, seem clamorous enough to-day; they have been more clamorous in the past. The "crisis" at this moment has all the air of vital stringency; we forget that fifty and sixty years ago it was more stringent still. It is the fatality of Austria-Hungary never to be without a "crisis" of sorts, and yet always to evade the logical issue—the logical issue, in the view of the pessimists, being disruption. But is disruption the natural outcome of an internal commotion? Is there an instance in modern history, of a State, not shattered to pieces by a foreign foe, but shattering itself to pieces by force of centrifugal reaction? We sometimes forget how great, in these days of railroads and multiplied intercourse, is the cohesive power of a State merely because it is a State. And in the case of the Dual Monarchy it is not paradoxical to maintain that its defiant strength is largely due to its very complexity; that the diversity of the antagonisms it contains really makes for equilibrium; that there is, in fact, a static quality in the infinity of its cross-currents and cross-purposes, and in the intermingling of its multifarious opposites. If one were to say that Austria-Hungary is too bewildering for revolution, too much at war with itself to be subverted, it would be difficult to impugn the statement as merely fanciful.

But the realm of the Hapsburgs has many and positive elements of strength. The Monarchy, to begin with, is an admitted point of agreement. Nobody has ever dreamed of proposing to upset it. Secondly, the dynasty is equally popular and equally secure. So long as there is a throne, it is not conceivable that any one but a Hapsburg should occupy it; and the influence of the throne in all that concerns Austria-Hungary, its domestic as well as its foreign affairs, is greater at this moment and finds a readier ac-

ceptance than at any period of the confessedly autocratic régime. Again, as a third bulwark of the State, there is the army, in which all must serve, which is of all races and creeds, and therefore of none, and the atmosphere of which is broadly and impressively imperial. And beyond this, and beyond even Palacky's dictum on the "international necessity" of Austria-Hungary, there is the fact that no race, as a race, has any interest in, or anything to hope from, disruption. Even the Kossuth Irreconcilables wished to maintain the link of the Crown; and as for the Czechs and the Poles and the Italians, it is not for separation from, but for fuller liberty within, the Empire, that they agitate. The Catholic German-speaking Austrians have no real desire to form a part of Protestant Germany, and the Slav races, in spite of their just grievances against the Magyars, know that revolt simply means exchanging the Hapsburgs for the Romanoffs. There is, in short, no movement to which the old formula of "self-government, but within the Empire," might not be applied; and the sooner it is applied to the peoples who are struggling to-day with a greater intensity and success than ever against their German and Magyar rulers—to the Southern Slavs, especially—the better for the peace and stability of the whole Empire and of each of its parts.

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